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ABSTRACT

This proposal is intended to provide the California Community College system with a means by which to better serve student needs and enhance the ability of the Chancellor's Office to record and report the many different certificates that are awarded by California's community colleges. This proposal is designed to provide the Chancellor's office with a simple classification for awards that will allow for much more complete reporting of certificates than exists presently. The proposal is divided into two major sections: Chancellor's Office Approved Career Certificate Programs and Locally Approved Certificate Programs. Both areas include a description of program features and the approval process. For the programs approved by the Chancellor's office, certificates may be awarded for any number of credit or noncredit hours; credit programs of 18 or more units require the approval of the Chancellor's office, and Career Certificates must meet certain criteria and be approved by the governing board. Locally approved certificate programs may consist of one or more courses of less than 18 credit units or equivalent noncredit hours that lead to an occupationally relevant set of skills, and proposed programs must be approved by discipline faculty. A table on the last page of the proposal outlines the differences between the Career Certificates and the Local Certificates. (JJL)

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ED 432 339

THE ACADEMIC SENATE
For California Community Colleges

A Proposal to Revise the Use of Certificates

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Spring 1999

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A Proposal to Revise the Use of Certificates

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

Adopted Spring 1999

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INTRODUCTION

This proposal is intended to provide the California Community College system with a means by which to better serve student needs and enhance the ability of the Chancellor's Office to record and report the many different certificates that are now awarded by local community colleges. The proposal seeks to provide for certificates that have a high degree of credibility with employers so that they will be helpful to students seeking employment. Adoption of this proposal will also bring greater uniformity to certificates and other awards, thereby making them more portable than are many of today's certificates.

This proposal will provide the Chancellor's Office with a simple classification for awards that will allow for much more complete reporting of certificates than exists presently without substantially increasing its workload. Thus the Chancellor's Office will be prepared to provide the public with information on the types and numbers of certificates earned by community college students.

The proposed guidelines include enough specificity for a clear concept; however, they do not include all the detail that will be necessary for the concept to be put into effect. Regulations must be adopted and curriculum guidelines and procedures developed.

It should be pointed out that this proposed system does not intend to provide for documentation of all the progress of community college students. Course work and other educational activities will be provided to students who do not seek any type of certification or diploma. The Certificates Task Force feels that the public must recognize the importance of educational progress that does not necessarily lead to a formal award.

The task force has reached consensus on two types of certificate programs: Chancellor's Office approved programs, for which *Career Certificates* will be awarded upon completion, and locally approved certificate career-ladder programs, for which certificates designated by whatever names that a district chooses, other than the term "Career Certificate," will be awarded upon completion. Such designations may include *Certificate of Proficiency, Certificate of Competency, Mini-Certificate*, or other names that describe that award appropriately and have established credibility with businesses and other hiring agencies.

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE APPROVED CAREER CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Features

Career Certificates may be for any number of credit units or noncredit hours. Note that such certificates may be granted for either credit or noncredit programs, subject to the conditions explained below. Previously, the Chancellor's Office considered only credit programs of 18 or more units[1] for state approval. This proposal removes that 18 unit floor. The Chancellor's Office currently approves all individual noncredit courses but does not have standards or procedures for approval of noncredit programs.

Credit programs of 18 or more units and noncredit programs of an equivalent number of hours will require Chancellor's Office approval. The equivalency between credit units and noncredit hours is currently being developed by the Chancellor's Office.[2] To be approved for offering of a Career Certificate, a credit or non-credit program must meet the criteria explained below.

To be eligible to award a Career Certificate the college must demonstrate to the Chancellor's Office that the program leads to the establishment of a career, regardless of whether the program is of more or less than 18 credit units or equivalent noncredit hours. Recognition of career status may be established by demonstrating that the program qualifies students to apply for licensure by a State or Federal agency, is officially recognized by an accredited vocational organization, or has met a labor market need demonstrated through the regular Chancellor's Office approval process.

The Chancellor's Office will also recognize model curricula developed by discipline-based organizations as well as evidence derived from employment analysis to substantiate the claim that a program leads to a career. The Chancellor's Office continues to collect and make available model program curricula and employment data on program outcomes. They are available on the Chancellor' s Office web site. Colleges can use these as guides to develop their own programs, introducing changes where necessary or desirable for their own student populations.

Career Certificate programs, as their name suggests, are intended to certify that students completing such programs are prepared to enter the careers designated on their certificates. These programs generally, but not always, require a year or more of study. Thus they usually include at least 18 units. However, students complete preparation for some careers with fewer units (e.g., phlebotomist). Colleges will be free to ask for Chancellor's Office approval of *any* program that they believe prepares students for careers.

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[1] Units refer to semester basis. The equivalent to 18 semester units would be 27 quarter units.

[2] The equivalency is expected to be 48 non-credit classroom hours to each credit semester unit.

It might seem difficult in some cases to apply the criterion that distinguishes between *career preparation* and *job readiness*, especially when we look at the many emerging and constantly changing positions in technology fields. But the judicious application of the above criterion by discipline faculty and the college's curriculum committee should be sufficient to make such distinctions. For example, it seems clear that a program certifying competence in a single computer software program may be sufficient for a student to get a fairly good job, a job that pays at entry more than twice the minimum wage. But an analysis of the job market will probably reveal that the student needs further education for a career because of the anticipated changes in software applications and the limitations of his or her training.

The Career Certificate should include on the document a statement of relevant and appropriate competencies. Including the competencies that a certificate documents is very important to those considering employing the holder. Employers will be able to know the skills and possible limitations of those holding a certificate. This information can only reduce the public's uncertainty about the meaning of a certificate, thereby increasing its usefulness and value. The statement of competencies should not be an exhaustive list of all proficiencies necessary to earn the certificate, only those that are clearly significant and distinctive.

Only Career Certificate Programs approved by the Chancellor's Office may be advertised in a college's catalog or other publications as leading to full career employability in the subject matter area. This regulation is designed to provide the public with assurance that advertised programs have been properly reviewed and approved.

Approval Process

Career Certificate Programs must be recommended by the college curriculum committee. This review and approval is to be based on academic integrity, need for the program, feasibility of offering the program, compliance with requirements in Title 5 regulations and the *Curriculum Standards Handbook*, and consistency with the college mission. This requirement is similar to Chancellor's Office review presently required according to Title 5 regulations. This review will reveal whether the proposed program meets the essential standards that the Chancellor's Office will use when it reviews the program proposal.

Career Certificate Programs must be approved by the governing board. Policies and procedures relating to curriculum are an academic and professional matter subject to collegial consultation with the academic senate as specified in Title 5 §§53200-204.

The Chancellor's Office reviews for need for the program, appropriateness to mission of the system, and compliance with regulations. The step-by-step details of this process will remain essentially the same as they are presently. The Chancellor's Office should check documentation that establishes these criteria but carry out this function in a timely manner and offer technical assistance where necessary to help eliminate delays in the approval process.

While many will regard this process as time consuming and maybe even frustrating, it is essential to assure reasonable accountability to the public.

With greater reliance on program models and use of its web site, the Chancellor's Office will be able to respond more efficiently to requests for program approval, approval essential for the accountability that the public is increasingly demanding in return for funding.

LOCALLY APPROVED CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Features

Locally approved certificate programs may consist of one or more courses of less than 18 credit units or equivalent noncredit hours that lead to an *occupationally relevant* set of skills. Programs of 18 or more units, or for noncredit programs the equivalent number of hours, will be considered *Career Certificate* programs and will require Chancellor's Office approval. While this number of units may not always distinguish the program as a *career ladder* or *option* program, it seems to be a reasonable measure to use as well as keeping in place current practice. Changing this numerical distinction at this time poses considerable complexities.

Locally approved programs may be part of a "ladder" of skills, beginning with job entry skills and leading to a full Career Certificate Program, or may constitute a skill set that enables a student to upgrade or advance in an existing career. Locally approved programs may meet a continuing education need for those in an evolving profession or may fulfill a demonstrated need that is verified by the local curriculum committee.

These programs usually provide career ladder instruction and are therefore of shorter duration and narrower in scope than the Career Certificate Programs described above. However, as stated, they may also provide instruction in options that enhance the abilities of people already in a career. For example a nurse may complete an emergency medical certificate. In addition, these programs will provide continuing education for some students who have already established careers (e.g., a mini-certificate in counseling substance abusers for health care professionals).

These smaller unit certificate programs will usually relate to Chancellor's Office approved career programs that have been established at the same college or in the same district. However, these programs may very well relate to a career program at some other institution connected geographically or by available distance education capabilities and community interest. Ultimately, it is up to the local curriculum committee to establish the fact that a need for a new program exists. The decision by this committee will be sufficient for the establishment of any certificate program.

It is suggested good practice that certificates for locally approved programs state relevant, appropriate competencies. As in the case of *Career Certificate Programs* (described above), in order to establish the credibility of a certificate, it is important for the college to make clear what competencies the holder of that certificate possesses. Although not all student preparation can be described in terms of demonstrable skills, most of the content of certificate programs can be related to objective skills.

Certificates for locally approved programs may be advertised in college catalogs or other publications as meeting the educational goals cited above. Note that only Career Certificate Programs may be advertised as providing full preparation for employment in a career. As stated above, only programs that have been scrutinized by faculty and approved can be advertised. Again, this requirement protects the public.

Approval Process

A proposed program must be approved by discipline faculty. Clearly discipline faculty are the professionals recognized -- and in fact hired -- for their expertise in their respective areas of instruction. A program is normally developed in response to a need recognized by discipline faculty. They are in a position to know whether they have the expertise and whether the college has or is likely to acquire the resources to offer a proposed program. A program not supported by discipline faculty should never go forward.

The proposed program must be reviewed by the college curriculum committee for academic integrity, compliance with requirements in the *Curriculum Standards Handbook*, consistency with college mission, meeting a demonstrated need, and feasibility. Vocational faculty will provide evidence of need for a proposed program. Advisory committees, when appropriate, will also review the content of the proposed curriculum for appropriateness to job requirements. The Academic Senate will develop additional guidelines for local curriculum committees to use in their program approval process as it has done for course approval.

Again, the college curriculum committee, using the above procedural guidelines, will have the responsibility to assure that the proposed certificate program meets a demonstrated need and has been designed well. Further guidelines that will help make this process efficient and effective will be included in later editions of the *Curriculum Standards Handbook*.

A regional coordination structure will review proposed certificate program offerings to discourage unproductive competition and unnecessary duplication. A coordinating mechanism to discourage unproductive competition and unnecessary duplication is essential. Occupational Education deans and academic senate representatives should determine how to organize according to regions and, possibly, communities of interest (e.g., allied medical programs) for this purpose. The guidelines for such a mechanism are best left to those in the groups representing the interests of Occupational Education professionals (i.e., CCCAOE).

Noncredit Programs

Noncredit community college programs in the State have been providing the public with high quality occupational and career preparation. Noncredit community college programs will grow in importance as they offer much needed instruction to adult learners seeking career and job advancement. Therefore, it is the position of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges that the full content of this proposal apply equally to noncredit programs. We anticipate that the Board of Governors will establish regulations pertaining to the review and approval of noncredit certificate programs. Until such regulations and accompanying procedures are established, it is our recommendation that colleges continue to be authorized to grant certificates for noncredit programs following their existing practices.

Certificates Summary

	Career Certificates	Local Certificates
Name	Must be called "Career Certificate"	Name determined locally, but must not be called "Career Certificate"
Availability	Available for both credit and noncredit programs	Available for both credit and noncredit programs
Units/Hours	Any number of units, but must show full career preparation	Must be less than 18 semester units (27 quarter units)
Chancellor Approval	Required	Not required. Must be recommended by Curriculum Committee and approved by governing board
Reporting	Reported through MIS to Chancellor's Office	Reported through MIS to the Chancellor's Office
Published in Catalog	Yes, as leading to full career preparation	Yes, 1) as part of a ladder to full career preparation, 2) for job update or career advancement, 3) as continuing education, or 4) other need as verified by the Curriculum Committee
Competencies on Certificate	Good practice, but not required	Good practice, but not required

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